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CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA

On Clean Up Australia Day, 6 March 1994, half a million Australians collected an estimated 20,000 tonnes of rubbish from roadsides, rivers, parklands, beaches and waterways around the country. The items they collected and removed ranged from paper litter to several thousand car bodies.

It all started from an idea by Ian Kiernan, 1994 Australian of the Year, to make a better environment by encouraging people everywhere to clean up their local area. The idea came to him while he was sailing single-handed around the world in 1986 and was confronted by seas polluted by the cast-offs of modern life - nappies, plastic bottles and bags, cans, garbage and refuse of every description.

On his return to Australia he organised Clean Up Sydney Harbour in 1989, when 40,000 volunteers removed 5,000 tonnes of waste from the harbour and its foreshores. Its success led to an expansion of the campaign to a Clean Up Australia Day across the country in each year since 1990.

The half a million people who turned out in 1994 covered over 8,000 sites across 698 cities and towns, where Clean Up Australia committees now operate.

The campaign has spread beyond Australia. In 1993, an estimated 30 million people in 80 countries took part in the first Clean Up the World, the second of which is planned for September 1994.

Ian Kiernan is now chairman of Clean Up the World as well as Chairman of Clean Up Australia. Within five years many nations have been moved to take part in an event which gives everyone the opportunity to take responsibility for their environment and bring about environmental change.

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